

AMD17-124

4/15/08

Bell, Leanne S (DOT)

From: SaraEllen Hutchison [saraellen@akcenter.org]
Sent: Monday, April 14, 2008 3:57 PM
To: DOT STIP
Subject: comments to STIP draft amendment #17
Attachments: STIP comments 4.14.08.doc

Please let me know if you cannot open the attachment.

Thank you,
SaraEllen Hutchison

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SaraEllen Hutchison
Sustainable Communities Program Manager
Alaska Center for the Environment
807 G. St., Suite 100
Anchorage, AK 99501
www.akcenter.org
907-382-7097



ALASKA CENTER *for the* ENVIRONMENT

G Street, Suite 100 * Anchorage, Alaska 99501

907-274-3621 phone * 907-274-8733 fax * ace@akcenter.org * www.akcenter.org

April 14, 2008

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Division of Program Development
3132 Channel Drive, Room 200
PO Box 112500
Juneau, AK 99811-2500
Mail Stop 2500 / (907) 465-4070
Via email dot.stip@alaska.gov

Re: Comments to STIP Draft Amendment 17

Dear Mr. Von Scheben:

Thank you for considering these comments to Draft Amendment #17 of the 2006-2009 STIP. Alaska Center for the Environment (ACE) advocates for a sustainable, livable community on behalf of over 6,000 members. As many of our general concerns are thoroughly covered in Lois Eptstein's comments on behalf of Alaska Transportation Priorities Project, ACE's comments will specifically address the Knik Arm Bridge proposal, Need IDs 20254, 20255, and 20256.

Draft Amendment #17's introductory letter says, "we have to be reasonably confident that all funding for a particular project will be available to complete it before we can add it to the STIP." This is not the case with the Knik Arm Bridge proposal. The world financial climate has changed, and state transportation is affected. The project depends on private investment, and at this point, no private investor has committed to the project, and public-private partnerships are often problematic for the states that enter into them. Furthermore, as the Draft acknowledges, our state will be receiving fewer federal transportation dollars than it has in the past, making it increasingly difficult to fund expensive transportation projects like this one.

Draft Amendment #17 also points out that it is the first STIP amendment since the Feb. 29, 2008 adoption of *Let's Get Moving 2030*, the Statewide Long-Range Transportation policy plan. Including any funds for this highly speculative and controversial bridge project is inconsistent with much of the stated goals and objectives of the 2030 plan. In our comments to the 2030 plan, we noted that much of the plan was consistent with our vision of a safe, energy-efficient transportation system that uses state resources wisely. The costs of the Knik Arm Bridge proposal are not well-estimated, and it is unreasonable to include it in the STIP.

The STIP should focus on maintenance of the transportation infrastructure we already have, and in light of increasing energy costs, should think ahead responsibly for Alaska's future. Commuter rail linking Anchorage to the Mat-Su would be a much more conservative solution to the transportation needs facing this region.

In conclusion, as we have commented before, setting aside money for a highly speculative, controversial, expensive project of questionable necessity is poor planning. We respectfully oppose including the Knik Arm Bridge proposal in this STIP amendment.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

SaraEllen Hutchison
Sustainable Communities Program Manager
Alaska Center for the Environment